REPRESENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE IN THE SELECTED NIGERIAN ENGLISH NOVELS: A STUDY

A SYNOPSIS SUBMITTED TO

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PhD SYNOPSIS

Title of the Research Proposal:

REPRESENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF NIGERIAN LITERATURE

Introduction:

The initial part of the proposed study deals with a short introduction to contemporary Nigerian literature and its relevance in today's world. Contemporary Nigerian literature is a diverse and dynamic field that provides treasured perceptions of the complexities of modern Nigerian society. It developed as a response to Nigeria's prosperous history, political unrest, challenges with post-colonial identity, and its place in an increasingly interconnected world. Many Nigerian writers explore the lifelong effects of colonialism on their nation's identity and culture. They examine the troubles of reconciling customary ethics with the impact of Western civilisation. With the swift pace of urbanisation, writers often focus on the lives of those living in hustling cities and explore themes like migration, rural-urban divides, and the impact of city living on individuals and families. Nigerian literature seldom reflects the nation's disturbed political past, addressing issues such as corruption, conflicts, social and political instability, social inequality, and human rights violations. Through their works, writers aim to scrutinise the imperfections of society and encourage reform. They also plunge into the experiences of Nigerians living in Western countries, struggling with the challenges of maintaining cultural identity in a foreign land and the conflicts between assimilation and cultural safeguarding. Gender roles, women's empowerment, and feminism are recurring themes in contemporary Nigerian literature, with authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie featuring strong female characters who challenge traditional gender norms.

Additionally, many writers incorporate traditional beliefs, folklore, and cultural practices into their stories, highlighting Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage. Social media and online platforms have given new voices a platform to be heard. Young writers utilise these platforms to discuss current affairs and connect with a broader audience.

Background:

This section will comprise a brief history of Nigerian literature and its emergence. Nigeria has a rich literary history that reflects its diverse culture, history, and identity. The storytelling tradition goes back to pre-colonial times when stories, myths, and folktales were passed down through generations to teach cultural values and history to different ethnic groups. English became the language of communication during colonialism, eventually incorporating it into Nigerian literature. In the early 20th century, literary pioneers like Amos Tutuola emerged, whose novel "The Palm-Wine Drinkard" (1952) blended indigenous storytelling with the English language, significantly deviating from traditional literary norms. The latter half of the 20th century saw the rise of the "Negritude Movement," with writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Chinweizu Ibekwe supporting African identity, culture, and decolonisation, gaining international acknowledgement and reputation. In the 1960s, Nigerian literature blossomed with writers tackling nation-building, political disillusionment, and social change themes. Wole Soyinka, Nigeria's first Nobel laureate in literature, gained acclaim for his works that critiqued societal injustices and corruption. In the 1970s and 1980s, writers explored themes of gender, feminism, and the struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society. The late 20th century and early 21st century witnessed a new generation of Nigerian writers who expanded Nigerian literature's thematic and stylistic boundaries. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie gained international acclaim for her novels, examining issues of identity, love, and the Nigerian diaspora. The digital age brought new opportunities for writers to engage with global audiences, fostering diverse voices and perspectives. Overall, Nigerian literature is a dynamic narrative that has evolved from oral traditions to a robust literary scene that captures the essence of Nigeria's past, present, and aspirations for the future. Through its diverse array of authors, themes, and forms, Nigerian literature remains a powerful vehicle for understanding the complexities of the nation's cultural, social, and political landscape.

Review of Research in the Field:

The review of research in the field mainly caters to the extent of research work undertaken in a particular niche. It primarily examines doctoral research work, research articles, and research papers. The idea of undertaking a review in the research field is to understand which parts of the literary canon have been explored and what remains unexplored. This proposed study investigates the

research activities undertaken in the Contemporary Nigerian Literature niche, including the eminent writers and their literary work. In this context, a review of literary works has been undertaken, which includes Chris Abani's Graceland, Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of no Nation, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's I Do Not Come to You by Chance and Elnathan John's Born on a Tuesday. Before going into the details of a review of literature of literary works, a brief review of the introduction of Nigerian Literature has been undertaken.

The study, "Mapping Nigerian Literature," explores Nigeria's literature, which originates in an oral literary tradition from the pre-colonial era and a more esteemed written tradition in modern times. It gives a general view of Nigeria's literary genres, including poetry, theatre, and literature. It focuses on the notable works of renowned authors like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The article also analyses the influence of colonialism, globalisation, and political turmoil on Nigerian literature, as well as the responses of Nigerian writers to these challenges. The article offers a comprehensive overview of Nigeria's diverse and abundant literary heritage.

The doctoral research study, ‘NARRATIVIZING VIOLENCE IN THE SELECTED WORKS BY CHRIS ABANI’ by researcher Z.D. LALHMANGAIHZAUVA is a study on the representation of violence in the selected works of Nigerian writer Chris Abani. The study explores Abani's experiences with violence, how they inform his writing and the complexities and nuances of his narrative style. Abani's Graceland is one of the works included in the study, and another is Becoming Abigail, Kalakuta Republic, Song for Night, and The Virgin of Flames.

The doctoral research study, 'Coming of Age Experience: A Study of Select African Novels, by researcher Panade S.V., is a comprehensive guide on the African Novel and the concept of 'Coming-of-Age'. It covers the emergence of the African Novel, the theoretical framework of 'Coming-of-Age', and the biographical details of select authors and their novels. The guide also explores the differences between Francophone and Anglophone African Novels, the physical and emotional changes during adolescence, the role of parenting styles, and various psychological theories on 'Coming-of-Age'.

"Graceland" by Chris Abani and "Half of a Yellow Sun" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are two literary works used in the Ph.D. The thesis is titled "Reflections of the Igbo Element in Fourth World African Literature" by Virage Munshaw as a secondary reference source. Gujarat University took., This study examines the

conflict between traditional and European cultures in Nigeria and how Igbo writers use language and imagery to resolve this dilemma. This study includes information about two Nigerian writers, Elchi Amadi and Flora Nopa, and their literary works.

The article 'Surplus City: Structural Adjustment, Self-Fashioning, and Urban Insurrection in Chris Abani's Graceland' advocates for worldwide critical involvement in urbanism and citizenship, emphasising the contradictions between elite and popular urban ideas. The allegories of economic prosperity and political reform, revealing local corruption and global exploitation, are provided by postcolonial urbanisation narratives such as Chris Abani's Graceland.

‘Beasts of No Nation’ is a significant work by Nigerian writer Uzodinma Iweala. No doctoral research has been undertaken on this work. The research work is confined only to research papers and articles. The study ‘Corruption of Innocence: War Memory, Trauma and Violence in Beasts of No Nation’ examines the psychological impact of war on child soldiers, highlighting the rise in civil wars and battle deaths since the end of the Cold War. Drawing from the movie 'Beasts of No Nation' and Cathy Caruth's perspective, the authors discuss the inhumane use of child soldiers and the intense physical and psychological scars they carry. They also point to the unholy training, rituals and attitudes that transform them into destructive beasts. The authors emphasise the need for awareness campaigns, rehabilitation programs, and international cooperation to address the issue of child soldiers. The paper emphasises that protecting children's rights and avoiding their recruitment into military conflicts are important. Other such articles on ‘Beasts of No Nation’ are ‘Mitigation, Globalization & Recent African Literature’ and ‘Children at War: Language and Representation in Uzodinma.

The article ‘Chris Abani's Graceland and Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation: Non-standard English, Intertextuality and Ken Saro-Wiwa's Sozaboy’ discusses how expatriate Nigerian authors use non-standard English forms and intertextuality in their works. The focus is on Chris Abani's Graceland and Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation, which have received little critical attention due to their use of language. In "Beasts of No Nation" "Sozaboy" was inspired by Ken Saar Wiwa's innovative language style and used a distinctive language for the protagonist. "Graceland", on the other hand, makes a more liberal use of non-canonical motifs, incorporating overlapping elements. The article provides context about Nigerian Pidgin and Nigerian English, examines their use in literature and analyses how the language is used in the two novels to place them within the spectrum of the Nigerian English script.

Other articles on 'Beasts of No Nation' include

1) Representing the Trauma of Child Soldiers: Ishmael Beah's A Long Way Gone and Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation

2) Wars as Postcolonial African Illness in Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation

The thesis entitled 'INTEGRATION OF THE DISINTEGRATED: HOME AND HOMELAND: A Study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novels' deals with the life of Nigerians who face many hardships because of family, ethnic and international disintegration. The researcher suggests ways in which the disintegrated home and homeland could be re-integrated so universal harmony can be rendered. The works used in the study are 'Purple Hibiscus', 'Half of a Yellow Sun' and 'Americanah' by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

The proposed study titled "Displacement, Suffering, and Disillusionment: A Postcolonial and Psychoanalytical Study of the Select Biafran War Novels." aims to analyse the social, economic, and moral aspects of oppression and the sufferings of the oppressed during the Biafran War. It also aims to examine the hopes, disillusionments, and impact of the war as depicted in select novels. The proposal discusses the scope and limitations of the study, highlighting the importance of understanding the effects of the Biafran War through the creative presentation of novelists. The works used for the study include Sunset at Dawn (1976): Chukwuemeka Ike, Destination Biafra (1983): Buchi Emecheta, Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English (1986): Ken Saro Wiwa and ‘Half of a Yellow Sun' by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

The doctoral work titled ‘In Search of Humanity: The Bond That Matters in the Selected Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie' uses Adichie's works to put forward the values of women's empowerment, identity, and how tradition differs from modernisation.

The study ‘Narrating a new nationalism: Rehistoricization and Political Apologia in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun' presents an alternative interpretation of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun, which focuses on the thematisation of post-independence Nigerian nationalism. The novel represents a subtextual privileging of a form of nationalism that centres on the ethnic group. Adichie's commitment to articulating a 'Biafran' position on the Nigerian Civil War is questioned, as it is viewed as a socially symbolic act involved in polemic and strategic ideological confrontations. The article interrogates the historicisation of the war and uncovers political contradictions that may have influenced the thematic mission. The novel gestures beyond fiction and becomes enmeshed in ongoing contestations over Nigeria's post-

independence politics, history, and national identity. These discourses remain deeply mired in sub-regional and ethnic positioning and continue to be articulated through various narrative channels, both fictional and non-fictional. The article's angle is one of many alternative responses to the Biafran perspective offered in the novel.

The central idea of the study, 'Seeds of peace amidst violence Nigerian fiction narratives' is to examine the search for peace in the middle of violence in Nigerian novels. The study analyses various works of African literature, including Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People, Wole Soyinka's Season of Anomy, Nadine Gordimer's July's People, Sefi Atta's Everything Good Will Come, Purple Hibiscus' and 'Half of a Yellow Sun' by Adichie to understand the struggles faced by African peoples in their quest for peace and identity. The study aims to find a basis for restoring peace and order in Nigerian society through literature documents that have made a tremendous contribution to stoking the fire of human revitalisation, restoring lasting peace, and spreading nonviolence. This study ends with the hope for peace and nonviolence in the words of Yoko Ono's 'Peace position of not fighting for peace'.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel "Half of a Yellow Sun" has received significant critical appreciation in terms of research articles and PhD thesis. Some of the thesis titles are

1) War Race and Religion Woman Subjectivity in the novels of Tahmima Anam and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

2) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie A Critical Study of her Fiction

3) Narrative structures and cultural identity: A Study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Fictions

The study ‘Nwaubani’s I Do Not Come to You by Chance’ explores societal issues of poverty, corruption, and bad governance in post-colonial Nigeria through Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's novel, I Do Not Come to You by Chance. The text uses critical content analysis and Reader-response Criticism to argue the issues in the prose-fiction. The novel portrays scammers' adopted formats and their Centre Intelligence Agency (CIA) as an intelligent base. The text condemns corruption and suggests that governments must take appropriate steps to address social anomalies in Nigerian society. The paper also highlights the negative implications of internet scams in Nigeria and their impact on the nation's global image. The author argues that the intelligence of scammers can be used positively

to benefit society. The literary work addresses the principal function of literature to society.

The article 'The Legacies of Empire in Nwaubani's I Do Not Come to You by Chance and Mengestu's All Our Names' investigates the Black Lives Matter movement in Africa and prioritises anti-Black protests in the United States and Black people and focuses on domestic forms of violence and systemic inequalities. Contemporary African writers Nwabani and Manjesto critique these narratives, linking domestic violence against blacks in the diaspora to the Euro-American destruction of African life through slavery, colonialism, and neoliberal capital. Their work challenges the movement's feeble participation in anti-blackism in Africa, highlighting the ongoing dehumanisation of Africans and the global normalisation of African descendants.

Other research articles on Adaobi Nwaubani Tricia's I Do Not Come to You by Chance include

1) THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION AND ETHICALLY VALUED LIFE IN ADAOBI TRICIA NWAUBANI'S I DO NOT COME TO YOU BY CHANCE

2) Strange[r] Encounters: I Do Not Come to You by Chance and the Rhetoric of 419

3) Email Scams, Nollywood Movies, and the New African Literary Novel: Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's I Do Not Come to You by Chance in the Post-Global Age

The article 'Religious Extremism in Elnathan John's Born on a Tuesday' focuses on religious intolerance and its impact on terrorism and violence, particularly in northern Nigeria. It uses Elnathan John's novel Born on Tuesday and Carl Jung's psychoanalytic theory to examine the roots and consequences of this problem. The study shows that various interpretations, ideologies, and fanatical practices within religious sects contributed to the violent incidents. Religious discord among different groups, poverty, misunderstanding of aggressive religious leaders, and the political environment also play a role in fostering extremism. The article suggested various solutions, including security measures, poverty reduction projects, promoting secularism, and educational initiatives to counter religious extremism.

This article ‘LITERATURE AND FUNDAMENTALISM: BORN ON A TUESDAY AS INSIGHT IN THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN NIGERIA’ focuses on Born on a Tuesday, which tells the disturbing story of violent religious extremism and its underlying causes. This is the story of Dantala, a young man from northern Nigeria. With his traditional Islamic education, he became a religious teacher in a Koranic school. However, he joins a criminal organisation called the Cockatree Boys to investigate how fundamentalism arises from criminal activity and the glorification of violence. This article aims to examine various issues such as nizam al-majiri (sending boys to madrasas), determinism, religious extremism, and terrorism. It challenges the perception of Islam as a peaceful religion due to the prevalence of individual Muslims in extremist and terrorist groups. The study further explores the origins and motivations of religious fundamentalism, particularly in the Islamic context. This conclusion suggests recommendations to reform the Mejri institution and the role of teachers and educators to prevent it from becoming a hotbed of terrorism.

The paper ‘Psychosexual and Psychosocial Development of Male Protagonist: A Bildungsroman Analysis of “Born on a Tuesday” examines the psychological, sexual, and social growth of a male protagonist in Elnathan John's Born on a Tuesday. It employs Psychoanalysis and Eric Erickson's Psychosocial Development Theory to analyse the protagonist's defence mechanisms in combating life crises in African cultural contexts. The study reveals various psychological consequences, such as repression, sublimation, displacement, depression, anxiety, and disillusionment. The protagonist in the novel, Dantala, uses repression and sublimation as unconscious defence mechanisms, pushing disturbing feelings out of consciousness. The study explores different perspectives of growth, such as social, cultural, familial, sexual, and academic, and the techniques used by the novelist to depict the protagonist's experiences in Nigerian or African contexts.

Other research articles on ‘Born on a Tuesday’ are

1) Postcolonial anarchy and minority discourse in Elnathan’s Born on a Tuesday, Sule’s Sterile Sky, and Yakusak’s After They Left

2) And Trauma Became Flesh: Terrorism, Violence and Trauma in Elnathan John’s Born On A Tuesday And Helon Habila’s The Chibok Girls

3) RELIGIOUS FANATICISM IN NORTH NIGERIA: ELNATHAN JOHN’S BORN ON A TUESDAY

4) SISYPHEAN STRUGGLES AND NEGATIVE CAPABILITY: A DISCOURSE IN ELNATHAN JOHN'S BORN ON A TUESDAY

Importance of Study:

1) By studying contemporary Nigerian literature, one can gain valuable insight into the country's distinctive identity and wide-ranging cultural influences.

2) Nigerian literature explores societal issues such as corruption, governance, gender, and human rights.

3) Contemporary Nigerian literature offers insights into how globalisation impacts national identity by showcasing how Nigerians blend global trends with local traditions.

4) Nigerian women writers are writing about gender issues and struggles women face, advocating for women's rights and empowerment. Studying their works can contribute to discussions about gender equality.

5) Nigerian literature reflects social change over time, making it a valuable resource for scholars to document and share.

6) Contemporary Nigerian literature allows authors to criticise society and spark change. By studying this literature, we can explore how it can bring about positive change.

Contemporary Nigerian literature can significantly impact society by highlighting important issues and showing different perspectives. This can help start conversations in academic and non-academic settings.

Research Objectives:

1) To study the following works of Nigerian writers:

a) Chris Abani- Graceland (2004)
b) Uzodinma Iweala- Beasts of No Nation (2005)
c) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie- Half of a Yellow Sun (2006)
d) Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani- I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009)
e) Elnathan John- Born on a Tuesday (2016)

2) Exploring societal issues such as poverty, corruption, and gender roles in contemporary literary works.

3) To compare works by authors from diverse backgrounds to identify shared concerns and unique perspectives.

4) Investigate how Nigerian literature is a forum for evaluating and commenting on current social and political concerns such as corruption, inequality, human rights, and government.

5) Examine how contemporary Nigerian literature depicts changing concepts of gender roles, identity, and sexuality, considering how these issues intersect with broader societal developments.

6) Examine how Nigerian literature deals with the challenges and opportunities given by globalisation and how this is reflected in the characters' cultural identities, interactions, and conflicts.

7) Assess how technology in Nigerian literature is represented, including its impact on communication, relations and cultural practices, as well as shaping the characters' views of modern life.

8) Study the relationship between contemporary Nigerian literature and experiences of migration and diaspora communities, which shed light on various cultural hybridity, nostalgia, as searching for a sense of belonging.

9) Examine the characters in Nigerian literature to see how they symbolise the intricacies of modern life, such as their challenges, goals, and clashes with societal conventions and ideals.

Research Methodology:

The proposed study will utilise the qualitative analysis method for research, which involves the following:

1) Close reading method
2) Content analysis method
3) Interpretative method
4) Comparative analysis method.

The primary and secondary sources will be studied using the above research methods. The study begins with a close reading of primary texts. The primary purpose is to connect with the text profoundly and unearth layers of meaning that may not be immediately evident. The interpretative method improves

understanding of themes, symbols, and character motives. It broadens the reader's comprehension and enables a more detailed explanation of the text's importance. Comparing literary works allows us to see common themes, cultural distinctions, and what the authors tend to represent. It assists us in determining what authors have in common and what distinguishes each.

Research Limitations:

1) The proposed study is limited to the selected works of Chris Abani, Uzodinma Iweala, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Abaobi Tricia Nwaubani, and Elnathan John.

2) The proposed study involves contemporary works of Nigerian Literature from 2000.

3) Contemporary Nigerian Literature involves various themes, but exclusively contemporary themes such as war, politics, crime, corruption, religion, and human rights are considered for the study.

Chapter Scheme:

Chapter 1: Introduction

(Introduction to the History of Nigerian Literature, consequences of the Nigerian History on contemporary literature)

Chapter 2: Study of Chris Abani's Graceland (2004)

(A brief introduction to the influence of Nigerian Literature on Chris Anabi, Critical analysis and interpretation of Graceland, Reflection of contemporary life elements in the given literary work)

Chapter 3: Study of Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation (2005)

(A brief introduction to the influence of Nigerian Literature on Uzodinma Iweala, Critical analysis and interpretation of Beasts of No Nation, Reflection of contemporary life elements in the given literary work)

Chapter 4: Study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun (2006)

(A brief introduction to the influence of Nigerian Literature on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Critical analysis and interpretation of Half of a Yellow Sun, Reflection of contemporary life elements in the given literary work)

Chapter 5: Study of Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009)

(A brief introduction to the influence of Nigerian Literature on Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Critical analysis and interpretation of I Do Not Come to You by Chance, Reflection of contemporary life elements in the given literary work)

Chapter 6: Study of Elnathan John's Born on a Tuesday (2016)

(A brief introduction to the influence of Nigerian Literature on Elnathan John, Critical analysis and interpretation of Born on a Tuesday, Reflection of contemporary life elements in the given literary work)

Chapter 7: Conclusion

(Comparative analysis of the above five literary works and highlighting the contemporary life elements reflected in the works)

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